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Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy

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About VFH

The VFH is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to developing and supporting research, education, and public programs in the humanities. We at the Foundation believe the humanities are active and public, not remote and academic. They are a living, evolving part of our everyday lives and all we do -- from deciding how to vote, to trying to understand our ancestors' lives, to reading a poem, to interpreting the TV news, to understanding the impact of science and technology, to communicating with neighbors and strangers.

Through grants and fellowships, media productions, publications, exhibits, and seminars, the VFH reaches a large public audience. VFH projects apply the various perspectives of history, literature, philosophy, cultural and religious studies, and other fields of the humanities to contemporary and abiding human questions. They contribute to the interpretation and understanding of cultural traditions, and to the understanding of current policy debates.

Overview

The VFH incorporates: a Grant Program; a Fellowship Program; the Institute for Violence, Culture & Survival; the Center for Media and Culture; the Virginia Folklife Program; Regional Councils, and various Special Initiatives and collaborative projects including the Virginia Festival of the Book, the Southern Humanities Media Fund, and the Virginia Association of Museums.

Since it was established in 1974, the Virginia Foundation has supported more than 1500 grant projects. These have included scores of seminars and related programs for teachers; nearly 200 individual and collaborative fellowships. VFH has also undertaken a host of activities conceived, developed, and carried out by VFH Board and staff. In all, the Foundation has sponsored nearly 40,000 humanities programs serving communities large and small in every region of Virginia.

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The VFH currently is sponsoring two major statewide initiatives. One, on Violence and Culture, includes the establishment of a research institute to investigate this complex subject from various points of view. The other, on Science, Technology and Society, responds to issues raised by rapid progress in science and technology and examines the impact of these changes in government, economics, culture and community.

As it expands its influence, VFH will target new opportunities for collaboration and partnership with institutions, organizations, and individuals throughout Virginia and beyond -- while working to make all programs and activities accessible to grassroots audiences around the Commonwealth.

Affiliations

As the state humanities council for Virginia, the VFH is affiliated with the National Endowment for the Humanities, which provides a portion of our funding. VFH is also affiliated with:

- the University of Virginia, but has its own separate board, budget and incorporation;
- the Virginia Association of Museums, and through this organization supports many museum exhibits and programs around the Commonwealth.
- the Southern Humanities Media Fund, an organization which supports the creation and production of special film and video projects in the region.

Programs

The Foundation promotes the influence of the humanities through the following Centers and services:

- A **Grant Program** that awards funds for conferences, seminars, town meetings, exhibits, lectures, radio programs, and film and video productions.
- The **Center for the Humanities** which awards residential fellowships, sponsors seminars and colloquia, and hosts statewide meetings.
- The **Institute for Violence, Culture & Survival**, which supports research and programs that address violence and its long term consequences.
- The **Virginia Folklife Program** that documents, interprets, and presents programs on traditional cultures.
- **Regional Councils** that develop local community resources and programming.
- **Special Initiatives** that focus on significant historical, literary, and contemporary issues and create statewide, multi-year projects.
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- The **Center for Media & Culture** which provides workshops, film and video editing facilities, and consulting services to non-profit organizations and educational institutions.
- **Collaborative Projects**, including the **Virginia Association of Museums** and the **Southern Humanities Fund**.

Accomplishments

The VFH has taken a leading role in anticipating, developing and supporting new public programs on contemporary issues. It boldly has explored topics such as the meaning of community; health care reform and medical ethics; the untold stories of Virginia's African Americans, Native Americans, and Women; individual rights and responsibilities; and the problem of violence, among many others.

In addition, The Foundation was the first state humanities council in the nation to establish a series of annual initiatives to help target programming to a statewide audience. It was the first to create a network of regional councils to strengthen humanities programming in underserved areas of the state and now reaches audiences in Appalachian, Piedmont, Chesapeake, and Northern Virginia regions. The Foundation also was first among state humanities councils to incorporate a statewide folklife program to document, interpret, and present programs on communities. Finally, the VFH was the first to develop a media center to explore the meaning of film in culture. We also assist Virginia's filmmakers by offering state-of-the-art equipment to be used in producing documentary and other humanities-related films.

Through its fellowship program, the VFH has supported development of important new publications in every major field of the humanities. Millions in Virginia and nationwide have enjoyed exhibits created through the Foundation's grant program or its annual initiatives. Books edited and published by staff continue to be used for research, in community discussion programs, and in high school and college-level courses throughout the state. Each year, VFH summer seminars and institutes help Virginia's teachers develop new strategies and curriculum materials for classroom use. Outstanding service to libraries and museums is a key element of the VFH mission.

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